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ABSTRACT

A project on the ways in which children and families move from one learning environment to another works to build awareness of and strengthen transitions in the early childhood years through a series of national and regional conferences and by identifying promising transition programs in five regions of the country. This document describes transition efforts in the Southeast. The first section profiles seven transition programs that are administered or funded by local school districts. The second section highlights three school-based transition programs that strengthen links between preschool programs and the elementary schools which the children in the preschool programs will one day attend. Five comprehensive preschool transition programs are profiled in the third section. These programs embody horizontal transitions that strengthen links between social service providers and early intervention programs at the preschool level. The profiles in the first three sections describe the need that is addressed by the program and the program's innovative approach and components; discuss the program's effectiveness; and provide the name and address of a contact person for the program. The fourth section describes four programs that concern parent involvement and education. A contact person is listed for each program. A list of 28 suggested readings is provided. (BC)

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SHARING SUCCESS IN THE SOUTHEAST:

PROMISING PROGRAMS IN PRESCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL TRANSITION

PS 020993

SERVE

SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education

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SHARING SUCCESS IN THE SOUTHEAST:

PROMISING PROGRAMS IN PRESCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL TRANSITION

September 1992

SERVE
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education

Affiliated with the

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ABOUT SERVE, SHARING SUCCESS, AND SERVEing YOUNG CHILDREN

SERVE, the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education, is a coalition of educators, business leaders, governors, and policymakers seeking comprehensive and lasting improvement in education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The name of the laboratory reflects a commitment to creating a shared vision for the future of education in the Southeast.

The mission of SERVE is to provide leadership, support, and research to assist state and local efforts in improving educational outcomes, especially for at-risk and rural students. Each year, the laboratory focuses on one of the national goals for education established by the President and National Governors' Association.

One way in which SERVE emphasizes the national goals is through its Sharing Success program, which recognizes exemplary school programs and practices in the Southeast that offer innovative ideas for meeting the national goals. This publication highlights programs recognized by the SERVEing Young Children project, which focuses on the first national goal: all children will start school ready to learn.

In addition to recognizing programs, a primary goal of Sharing Success is to share information about successful programs throughout the region. Descriptions in this document provide information about promising programs that help children make a smooth transition from home or preschool into elementary school. These descriptions are also intended to serve as inspiration to others to try strategies that have been used with success. Readers are encouraged to call the listed contact persons for more information.

The selection process for Sharing Success programs begins with invitations to state education agencies and school districts to nominate successful programs. The self-nomination form asks for a brief description of the program, details on its operation and costs, and evidence of its effectiveness. A panel of reviewers, consisting of subject area specialists from state departments of education and district administrations from throughout the region, evaluates the programs. Reviewers then conduct on-site visits and select programs that embody effective practices.

For additional information about the Sharing Success program, SERVE, or the SERVEing Young Children project, contact:

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Tallahassee, FL 32301-2950
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FOREWORD

by Sharon Lynn Kagan

When I was asked to write this Foreword, I was thrilled. My joy stemmed from the knowledge that SERVE's publication would chronicle an array of exciting programs and make their accomplishments accessible to many. Further, I was delighted because I sensed that our shared dream of bringing together care and education for young children was actually taking place.

The programs described herein represent the fruition of hard work over many decades by pioneers in our field. Developers of transition efforts from past eras would be proud to see their visions and legacies being implemented so splendidly. Indeed, these efforts promise to leave their imprimatur on a field that has wrestled with the challenge of transitions for years.

Transitions are not new, but they have never been an easy topic to understand conceptually or practically. On the one hand, we know effective transitions are critical to sustaining the gains children make in early childhood settings. Yet, on the other hand, we and others are often puzzled by what "transitions" mean. Are they home-school linkages? Grade-to-grade linkages? Pre-school-to-kindergarten linkages? Linkages among early care and education professionals? Linkages among those who render supportive services? Yes, they are all these and more.

Transitions are not new, but they have never been an easy topic to understand conceptually or practically.

At the very core of the transitions issue is the belief that making connections between the many providers for young children will help result in more continuous and coherent experiences for children. No one entity in this society can work in isolation and hope to meet the disparate needs of children. It is time to join together to create strategies, form relationships, and provide adequate support and resources to help every child move smoothly from one developmental stage to another.

Several federally funded projects have examined efforts and activities that have been effective in developing and maintaining smooth transitions or linkages. One of these projects is the Head Start Transition Project. Begun in 1986, it has provided valuable information about successful transition strategies and has pinpointed barriers that emerged as transition practices were developed and implemented. Many schools are now using these successful transition strategies, to include the following components:

- Preschools and elementary schools have written agreements providing for detailed descriptions of each school's responsibilities in implementing a transition program.
- Preschool records are transferred to the elementary schools regularly, where teachers ensure that there is no break in services when a child enters elementary school.

- Transition programs are offered throughout the year instead of just at the end of a child's last preschool year.
- Parents receive sufficient information about the public schools and how to access services.
- Kindergarten teachers make a greater effort to visit their future students; preschool programs provide opportunities for their children to visit future kindergarten classrooms.

The Head Start Transition Project has also identified several barriers to effective transition that must still be addressed:

No one entity in society can work in isolation and hope to meet the disparate needs of children.

- Teachers in preschool and early elementary school often have different teaching philosophies and approaches to education.
- Too often, preschools do not share information with feeder schools, or principals do not share information with teachers.
- Many parents do not have the skills to establish and maintain a successful relationship with the public school system.
- Some children, even after having attended a quality preschool program, do not have the skills or capabilities to meet the rigorous academic demands of some schools.
- Often, preschool and early elementary school teachers exhibit a lack of understanding and appreciation for each others' work.

Research efforts such as the Head Start Transition Project have helped child-care providers, public school teachers and administrators, business people, and social and medical service providers to begin to come together with a new vision of what they can accomplish by collaborating to serve young children and their families.

As people join together and new programs emerge, it becomes important that information about such programs is shared with other stakeholders. This document offers an opportunity for sharing. It contains examples of programs that incorporate effective transition practices and offers solutions for identified barriers as well. By learning more about what works in the "real world" of adequate, equitable, and comprehensive educational services for young children, we help to build a stronger educational system that better meets the needs of all children.

Sharon Lynn Kagan
Yale University
Bush Center in Child Development
and Social Policy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sharing Success in the Southeast: Promising Programs in Preschool-To-School Transition was produced with the help of a Regional Review Panel, teams of on-site reviewers, and many other educators from the region. Without their dedicated assistance, the Sharing Success program could not have been implemented and this publication could not have been produced.

SERVEing Young Children thanks those educators who submitted nominations of programs for consideration as well as the teachers, principals, and district staff who are listed as contacts in this document. Their commitment to educational excellence in the Southeast is evident by what their schools and students have achieved and by their willingness to provide assistance to their colleagues.

Regional Review Panel and On-Site Reviewers

Alabama

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Ann Roy Moore, Manager of Elementary Education, Huntsville City Schools

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SERVEing Young Children would like to extend special thanks to Sharon Lynn Kagan, Senior Associate, Yale University, Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy; and Sherral Leverette, Staff Assistant, SERVE.

Sharing Success in the Southeast: Promising Programs in Preschool-To-School Transition

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INTRODUCTION

If we are to build strong children for a strong America, we will have to change our definition of national security. True national security means keeping our families and children safe from the internal threats of poverty, joblessness, inadequate health care, inferior education, drugs and crime, and family breakdown. As a citizen army, we must battle for children in our cities, rural areas, neighborhoods, and school yards. As advocates, we must enlist all of our leaders in this fight.

Marian Wright Edelman
President, Children's Defense Fund

The U. S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services are collaborating in an effort to serve as "leaders in this fight" for children's equity and "true national security." Together they have provided funding for several projects that will examine the value of bringing educational and community resources together to provide comprehensive, continuous services to young children and their families.

One of these jointly-sponsored projects is funded through the Regional Educational Laboratories, which form a network across the United States to improve education. These educational laboratories are collaborating to focus attention on transitions children make from preschool to early elementary school. There are two major components of the project: first, national and regional conferences are being held to build awareness and provide information on how to help children and families move from one learning environment to another, (e.g., Head Start to public school); and second, promising transition programs are being identified and documented in five regions of the country. This document identifies and describes promising transition efforts in the Southeast--the major focus of SERVE's preschool-to-school transition project, SERVEing Young Children.

Effective transitions in education bring continuity and cohesiveness to a child's educational experiences by helping children maximize their potential as they move from one learning environment to another. Leading theorist, Sharon Lynn Kagan, describes two primary types of transitions in her 1990 report, *Coming Together: Linking Services for Young Children and Their Families*. "Vertical" transitions occur as children move from home to pre-school and from pre-school to school. "Horizontal" transitions occur between and among services at any single point n time (i.e., the connections between health, mental health, and social services) as service providers work with families and schools to assist children.

When the Sharing Success nomination forms were sent to state education agencies and school districts, a list of components that constitute effective vertical and horizontal transition practices was enclosed. Nominees were

encouraged to look at their programs and determine whether and to what degree they could show evidence of the following:

- Program continuity in pedagogy, structure, and/or philosophy within and between grade levels
- A strong family support/involvement component
- Communication and collaboration with other service agencies and/or a plan for accessing services
- Transfer of records between sites
- Systematic approach to training and support (e.g., joint training opportunities for staff)
- Focus on the needs of the child
- Adequate staff certification and credentials
- Communication between sending and receiving sites
- Developmentally appropriate screening, curriculum, and assessment
- Adequate funding and resources
- Strong leadership and/or shared decision making
- Continuous pupil progression
- Comprehensive integrated services

SERVEing Young Children has selected 19 promising transition programs in the Southeast for description and recognition in this document.

Based on observations made during site visits to 19 nominated transition programs, this document divides promising transition models into three categories:

- **District-Level Programs** are developed and promoted at the district level and may represent horizontal or vertical transitions or be a combination of the two. They are implemented at a school site following district guidelines.
- **School-Based Models** represent the combined efforts of an elementary school staff and staff from the preschool that feeds into it. The school-based model has smooth vertical transitions in place.
- **Comprehensive Preschool Models** bring together preschool programs and community service agencies. These preschools serve the entire family and therefore have smooth horizontal transitions.

In addition, some schools and districts are focusing on increasing parent involvement and providing adult education programs. Educational researchers studying transitions agree that parent education and involvement are two of the most important components in developing an effective transition program. Therefore, a fourth section describes promising **Parent Involvement/Education Programs**.

This publication is designed as a handbook for teachers, principals, preschool directors, and district administrators who want to improve the transitions children are making as they move through the educational system. You are encouraged to use the contact information that is provided for each of the programs for more specific information about the programs.

DISTRICT-LEVEL TRANSITION MODELS

District-level transition models are those that are administered or funded by local school districts. Implementation may occur at a few or many school sites depending on the needs and resources within the district. The programs include components that focus on horizontal or vertical transitions. Planning and implementation are under the guidance of the school principal who follows district guidelines.

District Models

1. **Aberdeen School District Pre-Kindergarten**
   Aberdeen School District, Aberdeen, Mississippi

2. **Choctaw High/Scope Early Childhood Education Program**
   Choctaw Tribal Schools, Conehatta, Mississippi

3. **Full-Day Comprehensive Child Development Program for Four-Year-Old Children**
   School District of Greenville County, Greenville, South Carolina

4. **Head Start-Public School Transition Project**
   Birmingham Public Schools, Birmingham, Alabama

5. **Natchez Public School Preschool**
   Natchez Public Schools, Natchez, Mississippi

6. **Pre-Kindergarten Early Intervention Program**
   Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, Florida

7. **Preschool Kindergarten Partnership**
   Pinellas County License Board, Pinellas County, Florida

ABERDEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT
PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Contact:

Sally Bourland
Federal Programs
Coordinator
Aberdeen School
District
P.O. Drawer 607
Aberdeen, MS 39730
(601)369-6427

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Aberdeen School District serves a rural population in Mississippi where few affordable preschool programs are available. Because many of Aberdeen's disadvantaged students were entering school without any preschool experience, kindergarten teachers were having difficulty meeting the needs of a student population with widely different experiences. The families of many of Aberdeen's young handicapped and developmentally delayed children were also having difficulty finding appropriate preschools for their children.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Aberdeen became the first public school district in Mississippi to provide a pre-kindergarten class for disadvantaged students, including developmentally delayed and handicapped children. Designed by the local superintendent, state department of education Chapter I director, and Aberdeen Chapter I coordinator, this model preschool program demonstrates what can be accomplished when a good working relationship is established between federally funded and locally funded programs.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- A home has been purchased and renovated for the pre-kindergarten program directly across the street from the elementary school the children attend when they enter kindergarten.
- A mainstreamed classroom setting is provided for developmentally delayed and handicapped students.
- The program is operated in conjunction with the regular school program. Pre-kindergarten school children attend school all day, eat lunch with the elementary school classes, and participate in physical education, music, library, and extra-curricular activities at the elementary school.
- Highly qualified preschool and special education teachers are hired, and teacher assistants are trained in mainstreamed classroom programs and practices.
- Preschool teachers are included as members of the school staff. Pre-kindergarten teachers attend all faculty meetings, participate in school events, and meet with the kindergarten teachers to plan lessons and weekly schedules.

- A developmentally appropriate curriculum has been designed and implemented to meet the needs of developmentally delayed, handicapped, and general student populations.

RESULTS

After monitoring the progress of students who have participated in the preschool program, the Aberdeen School District has determined that this early intervention strategy has had a significant impact on the school success of these children. Specifically, there has been a significant increase in student achievement as measured by the Bracken Basic Concept Scale, achievement test scores, and teacher observations. The program has also promoted collaboration among educators as well as a better appreciation and understanding of diversity.

CHOCTAW HIGH/SCOPE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Contact:

Mandy Walters
Curriculum Coordinator
Choctaw Department of Education
P.O. Box 6010
Choctaw Branch
Philadelphia, MS 39350
(601)656-5251 ext. 480

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Choctaw Indian Reservation consists of 22,000 acres of trust land spread over a five-county area in eastern Mississippi. The tribe has 5,000 members, 84 percent of whom are full-blooded Choctaw. Children under the age of 15 constitute forty percent of the tribal population, and half of these children are in the birth-to-six age range. Because the Conehatta community has the highest percentage of adults in the tribe who speak Choctaw as their primary language, many of the community's children were entering school with extremely limited English proficiency. This language limitation, along with other contributing factors, made early school success difficult for these young children.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Recognizing the positive long-term effects of quality preschool experiences on children, the Choctaw Department of Education, with the help of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, decided to adopt a well-documented early childhood education model. They chose the High/Scope curriculum model and the Conehatta community as the pilot site.

The High/Scope Foundation's collaboration with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is unique. It is the first time the Foundation has had the opportunity to implement all three of its program components at one site. The Choctaws have adopted High/Scope's infant/toddler program, preschool program, and kindergarten-through-third-grade program.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Participants in the program are divided into two teams—the infant/toddler and preschool team and the early elementary school team—consisting of a program administrator, teachers, teaching assistants, curriculum specialists, English as a Second Language (ESL) specialists, and parent educators.

- The High/Scope Foundation sends two consultants to Conehatta each month to conduct staff training. Typically, one consultant is assigned to each of the teams to deliver training that targets that team's student population. At times, the two teams receive joint training from High/Scope consultants.

- Training sessions cover such topics as appropriate learning environments, the daily routine, the plan-do-review process, the High/Scope key

experiences, child observation, appropriate assessment practices, and record-keeping.

- High/Scope consultants also conduct classroom observations and provide feedback and technical assistance.

- Teachers from the Choctaw Early Childhood Education Program and High/Scope consultants work together to incorporate elements of Choctaw traditions and language into the daily curriculum. The students participate in cultural lessons, which teach them traditional Choctaw stories, dance, beading, and basket making. These lessons take place in formal group lessons and are also incorporated into center activities in the classrooms.

RESULTS

This joint venture between the High/Scope Foundation and the Choctaw Department of Education is proving to be successful. Student attendance has increased and standardized test results indicate that the children are experiencing greater academic success. In addition to experiencing their own personal success, the Conehatta programs are finding that other Choctaw schools are showing increased interest in implementing similar programs. The Pearl River Day Care Center in the Pearl River community has shown the most interest and is already in the process of implementing some of the philosophies and programming techniques of the High/Scope curriculum.

FULL-DAY COMPREHENSIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

Contacts:

Patty Jones
Education Director
SHARE/Greenville-Pickens
Head Start
2404 Augusta Street
Greenville, SC 29605
(803) 235-5370

and

Lindsey Cole
Principal
Cone Elementary School
500 Gridley Street
Greenville, SC 29609
(803) 241-3414

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Poe Mill Village is one of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the Greenville, South Carolina area. Its unemployment rate is the highest in the county, its population is largely transient, and there are few homeowners. Both the Greenville County School District and the SHARE/Greenville-Pickens Head Start program offered half-day preschool to four-year-old children in Poe Mill Village. The district program at Cone Elementary School had difficulty sustaining student attendance due to inadequate provisions for transportation. In addition, the parents rarely became involved in school activities. A few blocks away, the Head Start program at the Verner Springs Head Start Center had difficulty finding space and improving parent attitudes toward public schools. Cone Elementary School's principal, asserting that none of these problems were of a magnitude to deny Poe Mill Village children a quality preschool education, proposed that the two programs begin working together. The goal would be to develop a pilot project that would increase the quality of programs for young children throughout the county.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The principal of Cone Elementary School and the director of SHARE/Greenville-Pickens Head Start met to share ideas on "how to make things work better." District-level personnel from both agencies made themselves available to help cut through red tape whenever possible. This group of leaders developed and signed a formal partnership for the pilot program (the SHARE/Greenville-Pickens Head Start and Greenville County School District partnership), which covered all aspects of the program including the use of funds.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Planning teams are organized from the staff of both agencies—administrators, transportation directors, and teachers—and parents.
- Head Start provides funding for bus transportation. The children are picked up at their homes in the morning and taken to the Head Start Center. They spend the morning participating in the Head Start program and then are transported by the Head Start bus to the participating elementary school. There, the children participate in the Greenville School District's afternoon program for four-year-olds. The Head Start bus takes the children home at the end of the day.

- Both agencies share the delivery of comprehensive support services (i.e., hearing, speech, vision, mental health, health, and social services).
- Head Start and public school preschool teachers share the responsibility of conducting four home visits and four parent conferences per child each year.
- The public school provides additional parent support through its Training Opportunities for Parent Success (TOPS) program.
- District and Head Start personnel meet regularly to plan strategies, evaluate progress, and solve problems.
- Head Start and public preschool teachers use the High/Scope curriculum, which provides for child-centered and child-directed learning activities. Teachers and teaching assistants meet daily to discuss the events of the day and make plans for future classroom activities.
- Administrative personnel, teachers, and teaching assistants receive joint training on the High/Scope curriculum, team building, collaboration, communication, trust building, and the importance of flexibility.
- Each agency keeps records of the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive progress as well as the attendance of each child. They also keep records of the level of parent involvement.
- The records kept by Head Start are added to each child's cumulative folder and transferred to that child's kindergarten program.

RESULTS

Since the formation of the partnership, children's attendance in preschool has improved dramatically and remains steady throughout the year. Monitors of the program give much of the credit to the availability of transportation and a full-day program. Four-year-old children in Greenville County receive the services they deserve, and the Head Start and public school programs have streamlined the process of service delivery. Parent contacts have doubled, and parents say they feel welcomed and appreciated. A clear indicator of the program's success has been the adoption of the pilot program by two other elementary schools and the feeder Head Start centers within the district. Participating administrators, teachers, teaching assistants, and parents are pleased with what they have seen happen in just one year and speak confidently about the success the children are expected to experience when they enter kindergarten.

HEAD START-PUBLIC SCHOOL TRANSITION PROJECT

Contact:

Janice N. England
Early Childhood
Program Specialist
Birmingham Public
Schools
P.O. Box 10007
Birmingham, AL 35202
(205)583-4692

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Birmingham Public Schools had an excellent early childhood program from kindergarten through third grade, and Head Start had an equally effective preschool program. However, these two programs were not collaborating as well as they could, and the parental involvement that the Head Start program initiated was not sustained once the children entered kindergarten. As a result, the children who participated in the Head Start program were having some difficulty making the transition into kindergarten. Administrators from both programs realized that they needed to work harder to enhance the transition of Head Start children into the public school system and to maintain close ties with their families.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The superintendent of Birmingham Public Schools, a strong supporter of early childhood programs, recognized the need for increased collaboration between Head Start and the Birmingham Public Schools' early childhood programs. At his request, the director of the Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity Head Start Program and the early childhood specialist from the Birmingham Public Schools system formed a partnership to develop a transition plan for Head Start children moving into kindergarten.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The Head Start director and the Birmingham Public Schools' early childhood specialist developed the "Cooperative Transition Plan," which outlines explicit responsibilities of the Head Start program, the Birmingham Public Schools, parents, and children.

- A team of Head Start, kindergarten, and first-, second-, and third-grade teachers developed an integrated curriculum reflecting the National Association for the Education of Young Children's "Principles of Appropriate Practice." This spiral curriculum, which expands on the children's previous years' learning experiences, is introduced in Head Start and continued through the third grade.

- Teachers and supervisory staff received joint training on the curriculum to ensure their understanding of its purpose and appropriateness in educating young children.

- Head Start teachers developed a "Getting Ready for Kindergarten" study unit which involves taking their students to visit public schools

and participating in kindergarten classroom activities in the spring before they enter kindergarten.

The project team also implemented many activities involving teacher-teacher and parent-teacher interaction throughout the year:

- Head Start and public school teachers work together to develop parent orientation sessions, a Kindergarten Open House, and local school get-acquainted meetings to provide information on the Birmingham school system.
- A complete set of each child's records is transferred from Head Start to the public schools.
- Head Start and public school teachers communicate on a regular basis, with special emphasis placed on sharing information in the spring concerning rising kindergarten students.
- Head Start staff work with parents to develop a summer calendar of activities that will help their children prepare for kindergarten.

RESULTS

The partnership has achieved its primary goal of enhancing children's transition from Head Start into public schools. Public school teachers report that children who have participated in the Head Start program make greater social and academic gains than children who did not participate in Head Start. Anecdotal records kept by teachers and administrators also reveal an increase in parental participation in school activities. Those who have worked on this collaborative effort attribute much of their success to working together on a well-integrated curriculum and indicate that the credit ultimately goes to a shared decision-making process that has brought renewed empowerment to administrators, teachers, parents, and children.

NATCHEZ PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL

Contact:

Judith L. Lann
Principal
Northside Primary
1445 George F. West Boulevard
Natchez, MS 39120
(601)445-2885

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Director of Special Education of Natchez (Mississippi) Public Schools believed it was vital that children with handicaps or developmental delays have the opportunity to attend an appropriate and high quality public preschool. Therefore, the Natchez Public School system pursued and was awarded a U.S. Department of Education grant through the Mississippi State Department of Education to develop the Natchez Preschool Program. The program promotes intellectual, social, physical, communication, and emotional development in three- and four-year-old children of varying physical and academic abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

One of the greatest strengths of the Natchez Preschool Program is that the preschool classrooms are housed at the two public primary schools serving kindergarten through first-grade students. Preschool teachers are considered part of the school staff, and faculty members work and plan with them throughout the year. The curriculum is play-centered, with great emphasis placed on language development and practical life skills. Children are selected to participate in the program based on their performance on various screening tests including the Language Accomplishment Profile. Those who exhibit the greatest need for intervention due to speech, language, hearing, or developmental impairments or delays are given priority enrollment; the remainder of the classes is filled from the general student population. Local Head Start staff work with the preschool program administrators to identify and refer special needs children to the program.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Each classroom is staffed with one certified exceptional education teacher and two assistants.
- The program is full-day. Non-handicapped students pay tuition; there is no fee for handicapped students. Extended-day child care is available, and a certified teacher directs this component of the program.
- Participants in the program collaborate regularly.
- Counselors from the Southwest Mississippi Mental Health Bright Young Minds provide referral services for parent and student needs.
- Local business leaders who participate in the Adopt-A-School program provide story readers, awards, and volunteer workers.

- Parent members of the schools' PTA programs conduct fund-raisers to purchase developmentally appropriate playground equipment for preschoolers, provide volunteers to help with the Books and Beyond program (which encourages at-home reading with parents and students), and host parent orientation meetings at the annual Open House and during parent/teacher conferences.

- Teachers and teaching assistants receive ongoing training in areas such as child development, language development, and referral procedures. This training is provided by staff from the Mississippi cooperative extension home economist office, the school district's speech pathologist, and the district's special education office.

RESULTS

Students participating in the Natchez Preschool Program show greater readiness for kindergarten than students who enter kindergarten without any preschool experience. They score higher on kindergarten screening tests. The children's socialization skills are more advanced, and they are more self-confident and independent. They are as likely to call on their peers as their teacher for help and information. Equally important, the children are learning to respect those who are different. Handicapped and non-handicapped students demonstrate an increased understanding of and appreciation for each other's unique gifts and talents.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Contact:

Sarah Sprinkel
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Program Specialist
Orange County Public
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445 West Amelia Street
Orlando, FL 32801
(407)849-3330

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

As increasing numbers of disadvantaged children entered kindergarten without benefit of a quality preschool experience, Orange County (Florida) Public Schools educators recognized the need for additional preschool programs. The county worked to serve those children being denied educational opportunities due to inadequate space in existing programs.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

When the Florida Department of Education allocated funding for early intervention programs in 1988, Orange County seized the opportunity to develop a preschool program for disadvantaged four-year-olds. To provide comprehensive services, the district's early childhood specialist designed a program that integrates the resources of Chapter I, pre-school handicapped, Head Start, Title XX, and private provider programs as well as local information and referral services.

The majority of students who are chosen to participate in the preschool program are those who have been identified by Chapter I or the Preschool Diagnostic and Intervention Services as educationally at risk and come from economically disadvantaged homes, substance-abusing families, and/or families served by Florida First Start.

Believing that children learn best when they are members of heterogeneous groups, the program developers designed a program that would provide comprehensive services to disadvantaged children within a well-balanced learning environment. They achieved this balance by offering up to twenty percent of the available space in preschool classrooms to the children of public school employees.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The pre-kindergarten program operates on the 180-day school calendar for a minimum of six hours a day with extended care available if needed.
- Parents are required to sign an agreement to spend a minimum of sixty minutes per month in the classroom. Teachers are required to make home visits at the beginning of the year.
- Every family has access to toy- and book-lending libraries as well as parent educational programs.
- A case manager monitors the placement of children into the programs and the integration of available services.

- An early childhood team makes monthly classroom visits and provides ongoing staff development.
- All pre-kindergarten teachers receive training in the use of the High/Scope curriculum. Based on Piaget's theories of child development, the High/Scope curriculum supports child-centered active learning.
- Efforts are made to place the children in pre-kindergarten programs that are part of their neighborhood elementary schools in order to assist them with their future transition from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.

In addition to these features, the Pre-kindergarten Intervention Program is supported by the following services:

- The Orange County Preschool Diagnostic Team provides assessment and support for those children needing exceptional education services, and team members provide pre-kindergarten teachers with classroom consultation services.
- Chapter I provides services for educationally at-risk students.
- Florida First Start provides family support at four of the schools with pre-kindergarten programs.
- The Drug Prevention and Student Assistance Programs provide in-service training and classroom support to pre-kindergarten teachers with students who were prenatally exposed to drugs and/or alcohol.

RESULTS

Orange County Public Schools' Pre-Kindergarten Program is an excellent example of the heights a public school system can reach when it obtains and builds upon funding and resources from as many sources as possible. All of the organizations have maintained their integrity while working with others to reach more preschool children and enhance the services each program provides. As a result of their collaboration, more Orange County children are receiving comprehensive quality services.

PRESCHOOL KINDERGARTEN PARTNERSHIP

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Early childhood educators in Pinellas County had been grappling with issues that confront everyone who works with preschool and kindergarten children: (1) preschool teachers rarely had the opportunity to pass on to the public schools the very useful information they had about their students when preschoolers entered kindergarten, (2) parents were concerned about their children being ready for kindergarten, and (3) incoming kindergarten students sometimes had difficulty adjusting to the new school environment.

Clearly, preschool and kindergarten teachers needed a vehicle for communicating with each other about the children they served. They also needed opportunities for clarifying misperceptions of their programs. Equally clear was the need to educate the families of young children about appropriate expectations for children at both the preschool and kindergarten levels so that parents could help their children make the transition from preschool to kindergarten.

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INNOVATIVE APPROACH

In 1990, the Pinellas County License Board, which oversees the licensing of area preschools and child-care homes, formed the Preschool Kindergarten Partnership (PKP). Since then, membership has grown to include the Pinellas County Kindergarten Teachers Association, Pinellas Association for Childhood Education International, South Pinellas Association for Children Under Six (SPACUS), Upper Pinellas Association for Children Under Six (UPACUS), and the Pinellas County Schools. A steering committee with representatives from each of these groups develops programs and projects that provide information on preschool and kindergarten curriculum, child development, and child-care options for teachers, students, and families with young children.

Under the direction of the PKP, preschool and kindergarten teachers now attend joint meetings on a volunteer basis to discuss developmentally appropriate practices, expectations for kindergarten, and parent education.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- A parent and teacher brochure, *Preparing the Whole Child for Kindergarten,* provides information for preparing preschool children to enter kindergarten and is disseminated to parents and other care givers through the Pinellas County License Board's child-care referral system, businesses, libraries, pediatricians' offices, Health and Rehabilitative Services centers, and the annual Pinellas Children's Festival.

- To promote early registration, the partnership conducts a campaign for early kindergarten registration and distributes a poster highlighting pertinent information to all Pinellas preschools and child-care centers as well as a letter explaining registration procedures that the schools and centers can copy and disseminate to parents.

- "Kindergarten Corner," a regular feature published in the SPACUS and UPACUS newsletters, highlights areas of the kindergarten curriculum.

- A speakers' bureau provides a list of experts who focus on the needs of young children. This list is available to any group serving young children but is used primarily by parents' groups at preschools and elementary schools.

- Articles and other parent information are furnished to preschools and child-care centers to display on parent education bulletin boards.

- A transmission form is placed in each child's cumulative folder when he or she enters kindergarten. The form gives pertinent information regarding the child's developmental progress, health concerns, and screenings. PKP has provided training on the use of this form for preschool directors, teachers of four-year-olds, and kindergarten teachers.

- A slide presentation describes the kindergarten curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices implemented by kindergarten teachers. This presentation was produced for preschools to present to the parents of rising kindergarten students.

RESULTS

The Preschool-Kindergarten Partnership has experienced resounding success. More than seven hundred preschool and kindergarten teachers participate in PKP-sponsored meetings. Community members, including doctors and social workers, request the brochure *Preparing the Whole Child for Kindergarten,* and there is a waiting list for checking out copies of the slide presentation on kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers receive relevant information about their students from preschool teachers rather than having to discover it on their own. Parents indicate that they experience less anxiety about their child's entry into kindergarten. Most importantly, with a new appreciation for the work that their counterparts do, preschool and kindergarten teachers have renewed their commitment to providing high-quality education to the young children of Pinellas County.

SCHOOL-BASED TRANSITION MODELS

School-based transition models strengthen links between a preschool program and a specific elementary school into which it feeds. They are the embodiment of smooth vertical transitions. This model represents the efforts by an individual or small group who work to develop a program that is unique to their school. Usually, the preschool program is housed at the elementary school or very close to it. The preschool and elementary school teachers receive joint training, which helps to facilitate a shared teaching philosophy and encourages the development and adoption of appropriate curriculum practices across grade levels. There is good communication among and between the teachers, and records collected at the preschool are transferred to the elementary school. Teachers and administrators also share decision making at both schools. The children who start school in these preschool programs do not have to make significant adjustments as they move from one program or grade level to another.

School-Based Models

1. **Dacusville Elementary School**
   Easley, South Carolina

2. **South Pointe Elementary School**
   Miami Beach, Florida

3. **West Oxford Elementary School**
   Oxford, North Carolina

DACUSVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The population in Easley, a rural Appalachian community in South Carolina, is economically disadvantaged. As in many poor rural areas, quality child care is difficult to find in Easley, and local school revenues are often inadequate to meet community needs. In order to enhance its programs and to meet the needs of children who attend school in Easley, staff at Dacusville Elementary School applied for South Carolina's Target 2000 Dropout Prevention Grant. When they received the funding, they developed the Successfully Teaching At-Risk Students program (STARS), which serves the entire school population with a special emphasis on students who are at risk for school failure.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The STARS program is a comprehensive plan for restructuring the total learning environment for students and teachers. It is designed around the staff's belief in child-centered education. In developing STARS, teachers and administrators at Dacusville looked at the curriculum, instructional methods, and daily operation of the school. Because the STARS program is funded by a Target 2000 Dropout Prevention grant, it focused originally on children who had been identified by teachers as at risk for school failure. It soon became clear to the principal and teachers, however, that instructional approaches that made sense for at-risk children could be used with the remainder of the student body; in other words, what was developmentally appropriate and instructionally sound for one group of children was also appropriate and sound for the other. Therefore, with the help of Target 2000 Dropout Prevention Grant monies, financial and human support from the Dacusville Parent-Teacher Organization and Parent Advisory Council, and the time and talents of the Dacusville staff, most components of the STARS Program now impact the entire student body.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The STARS program targets four specific areas: the language arts program, the math program, the overall school climate, and the summer enrichment program.

- Staff brought outside consultants to the school to help restructure the language arts and mathematics curricula. The teachers now use varying combinations of the Success in Reading and Writing program, literature-based reading units, and the Whole Language approach. They have also incorporated hands-on practical life skills into the math program.

- To improve the overall school climate, staff participated in Invitational Learning, a training technique that encourages a holistic approach to the educational process. The teachers examined not only student learning and self-concept development, but also factors such as the student working environment and teacher attitudes toward instruction and learning.

- In direct response to at-risk students' needs for summer enrichment and curriculum continuity, school staff developed the Summer Galaxy program, a three-week enrichment course featuring science and social studies themes. Dacusville registers at-risk students for the program first, then opens enrollment to the remainder of the student body, an approach that enables Dacusville to offer the program to a heterogeneous group of children.

- The science program centers around the Living Laboratory that is housed in the school's courtyard. It serves as a garden, weather station, and animal habitat.

- Community and business leaders have formed an alliance to enhance the programs at Dacusville. A local child-care center offers free child care whenever there is a school function or parents need to attend conferences. Private businesses have also helped to increase the use of technology at the school.

RESULTS

Students, teachers, and administrators at Dacusville Elementary feel good about the changes they have made. Teachers use developmentally appropriate instruction and assessment practices. This approach, coupled with ongoing training and encouragement, has revitalized their commitment to students and enhanced the gratification they feel in meeting their students' needs. Teachers and administrators at the local middle and high schools are so impressed by what is happening at Dacusville Elementary that they are also seeking ways to improve the teaching strategies that they use. The schools are becoming more student-focused and helping students make smooth transitions as they progress to middle school and high school.

SOUTH POINTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

In June 1990, a group of innovative educators in Dade County's public school system created a ground-breaking partnership with a private business, Educational Alternatives, Inc. (EAI). In creating this public-private partnership, the two organizations agreed to jointly run South Pointe Elementary School, which was being built to meet the needs of a rapidly growing low-income community in South Miami Beach.

In this five-year agreement, Dade County Public Schools and the United Teachers of Dade agreed to adopt EAI's Tesseract Individualized Education program. It was chosen to provide intellectual stimulation and a nurturing environment to the highly transient, economically disadvantaged student population at South Pointe Elementary School.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

EAI's school-based curriculum and administrative model, Tesseract Individualized Education, is based on current educational research. The program features a child-centered curriculum that provides flexible instructional groups, low student-teacher ratios, extensive use of technology, and a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for every student.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The school population is organized into learning communities encompassing the preschool programs through the sixth grade. Each community schedules a daily morning meeting at which announcements are made, children share stories and experiences, birthdays are recognized, and the children can make connections with their community "family." These communities eat lunch together, select themes to study, and work together on projects. Students remain within their community as they progress through the different grade levels.

- Up-to-date computer hardware and software are incorporated into every aspect of the school's program. There are at least three computers available for student use in every classroom. All computers within these rooms are networked throughout the school. Every teacher shares an office with a teacher in an adjoining classroom. In this office, each teacher has his or her own telephone and computer, which are also part of the network. There are two computer labs in the media center so an entire class can work at one time. One of these labs features Tapestry

(a product of Jostens Learning Corp.), which is an interactive emergent literacy program for preschool through second grade. It stresses the close connections that exist between listening, reading, writing, and speaking. In another lab setting, students can "dialogue" with each other simultaneously using the Discourse hardware/software network.

- All students have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which serves as the school's assessment tool and remains with the students throughout their enrollment in the school. Each plan contains six components:

    1. Goals—Goals for each student are established at the beginning of the school year at a conference that includes the teacher, the student, and his/her parent. These goals are reviewed and updated during three subsequent conferences scheduled during the year.

    2. Observation data—The teacher collects data pertaining to each student's established goals.

    3. Testing and skills information—These records include results of the Swassing Barbe Learning Modality Index, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, and the Stanford Achievement Test.

    4. Progress reports—These narrative reports include observations on each student's social habits, relationships, personal adjustment, capacity to empathize, work habits, and unique qualities.

    5. Student work—This component is a collection of each student's work throughout the year.

    6. Student photos—Each teacher takes candid photographs of the students throughout the year and includes these pictures in the back of the PEP.

To help South Pointe Elementary School staff implement the program from preschool through the sixth grade, EAI provides the following support:

- EAI conducts joint training for all teachers from preschool through sixth grade on developmentally appropriate curricula, authentic assessment, and appropriate computer use in the classroom. EAI also

NOTE:

To request a copy of the 1992 SERVE publication, *A Public-Private Partnership: South Pointe Elementary School*, see order form on page 51.

provides many training materials, manipulatives, PEP notebooks, and professional manuals.

- Through collaborative sponsorship with International Business Machines (IBM) and Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC), EAI equips South Pointe with the most up-to-date computer hardware and software available.

- Through a collaborative effort with the University of Miami, the student-teacher ratio is reduced greatly. Graduate and fourth-year undergraduate students in the university's education program serve one-year paid internships at the school so that every classroom is staffed by two teachers. EAI raises private dollars to support these internships.

RESULTS

Although South Pointe Elementary School has been in operation for only one year, the atmosphere that has been created there is strong evidence that the Tesseract program is meeting with great success. Parent and community volunteers abound throughout the school, and parents' responses to a Quality Service Index indicate a high level of satisfaction with their children's education. The innovative approaches to teaching and learning are producing students who are highly engaged in intellectual stimulation. This level of engagement alone leads the South Pointe staff to believe that the public school-business partnership is the right approach to meeting the needs of South Pointe children.

WEST OXFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Located in rural north-central North Carolina, West Oxford Elementary School serves 740 children from preschool through second grade; minority students comprise a majority (54 percent) of the school population. The school, which receives Chapter I funds, offers programs for children with autism, mental handicaps, learning disabilities, hearing impairments, and speech and language delays.

A demand for a curriculum that got "back to the basics" and higher standardized test scores was dictating the instructional practices used at West Oxford Elementary. In response to these demands, the instructional program became teacher-directed and lost its focus on the needs and interests of the students. The children were spending inordinate amounts of time memorizing facts instead of stretching their minds and creative capabilities. The teachers and principal wanted a change, and Granville County school system's restructuring program, "Project Design," provided a golden opportunity to bring about that change.

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INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Through Project Design, each school in Granville County was given the opportunity to redesign its instructional program. The ultimate goal of West Oxford Elementary School's program was to provide a mainstreamed, continuous progress curriculum which met the developmental needs of three- through seven-year-old children.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

A school-based leadership team made up of lead teachers, the principal, the assistant principal, and a teacher assistant monitored implementation of this model, which is designed around three major components:

(A) Cooperative teaching teams

- The school is organized into five cooperative teaching teams, each comprising a lead teacher and six to eight classroom teachers and teaching assistants who serve a multi-aged heterogeneous group of children.
- Each team is housed in a separate building that functions as a "school within a school."
- The teachers within a cooperative team make curricular decisions, determine the use of their budget—especially as it pertains to

consumable supplies and instructional materials—make student assignments, establish staff responsibilities, and identify areas for professional development and training.

(B) A developmental curriculum designed and implemented by the entire school staff

- Children are grouped in cross-age, cross-grade-level "families" throughout each cooperative team; first- through fourth-year (retained) students comprise each group.

- Teachers free students from rigid paper-and-pencil tasks, engaging them instead in hands-on, concrete activities.

- Teachers use Whole Language, literature-based reading instruction.

- The media center has been redesigned to provide children with an opportunity to explore, create, learn, and discover. The media center is now divided into three major areas dedicated to a specific theme. Each area contains book displays, manipulatives, and writing materials which support the students as they study that theme.

  1) The "Land Before Time" area has cave-like walls, a large paper mache´ dinosaur that talks, a volcano, and a large wall mural.
  2) The "Environmental Discovery" area focuses on the study of land and sea animals. It contains a reading loft and a fenced-in area with examples of various kinds of wood.
  3) The "Future World" area provides information on the universe and space travel. There is a mock-up of a space shuttle and a mural of the universe on the wall.

- Basal reading series, spellers, and other traditional school books are used as resources rather than student textbooks.

- One section of the school courtyard has been transformed into the Critter Place where animals and birds live in a natural habitat.

- An Authentic Assessment Plan, based on the state's move toward observation-based assessment, has been developed and piloted by the staff. The plan has five components:

  1) a parent rating form,
  2) student portfolios,

3) math/science performance tasks for exiting students,
4) second-grade reading and math assessments, and
5) comparisons of exiting student scores to baseline data.

(C) Flexible scheduling

- A weekly SPEC Day (Special Curriculum Day) has been implemented to extend instructional time and accommodate physical education, media, art, foreign language, and classroom teachers' enrichment activities. SPEC Day also increases teacher planning time and promotes the development of an inter-disciplinary curriculum.

- Each cooperating team provides its teachers with a half-day planning session each week.

RESULTS

West Oxford Elementary School has become an example of the positive impact that quality early childhood experiences can have on the intellectual growth of children, an impact that is significant enough to remain with them as they progress from early elementary school. After witnessing the success at West Oxford, the local receiving schools and high school have begun to collaborate with one another. They have formed the Oxford Connection which consists of Credle Elementary, which serves third and fourth graders, and Mary Potter Elementary, which serves fifth and sixth graders. They are receiving joint training and developing programs that will mutually benefit the students they serve. West Oxford's program has also received recognition from former Governor Jim Hunt, the North Carolina Association of Educators, and the National Education Association.

COMPREHENSIVE PRESCHOOL TRANSITION MODELS

Comprehensive preschool transition models strengthen links between social service providers and early intervention programs at the preschool level. These models are the embodiment of smooth horizontal transitions. Often linked to a nearby elementary school, they serve as an important first step in developing an effective transition program. These programs often demonstrate innovative use of funds available through different funding streams. At the core of these programs is a focus on each child's family, a strong belief in the power of interagency collaboration, and a desire to empower the parents in these families through education, job training, or job placement. Efforts are also made to ensure that children and families who are eligible for medical, dental, and social services receive those services in a reasonable and non-stigmatizing fashion.

Comprehensive Preschool Models

1. **Even Start Family Literacy Project**
   Birmingham, Alabama

2. **Flagler County Schools Daycare**
   Bunnell, Florida

3. **Just 4 & 5 Developmental Laboratory**
   Mobile, Alabama

4. **Preschool Liaison Program**
   Gainesville, Florida

5. **Stecoah Preschool Program**
   Robbinsville, North Carolina

EVEN START
FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Birmingham, Alabama, like many urban areas, was struggling to meet the needs of a diverse, low-income population. Over 90,000 parents in Birmingham have not completed high school, and one-third of all children age five or younger live in poverty. A team from the Birmingham Public Schools—consisting of the assistant superintendent for instruction, early childhood specialist, parent education coordinator, community education director, federal program coordinator, and federal program evaluator—determined that the first step in meeting the needs of these adults and children should be a family literacy project. In developing this project, they obtained funding from the federally funded Even Start program.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The philosophy behind the Even Start Family Literacy project is that the quality of life for a disadvantaged family is best improved when the family is provided with services tailored to its needs. Staff working on the Even Start Family Literacy Project assess families' needs and provide services by sending a home visitor into participants' homes and by providing training and referral services to adults at the Eureka Family Center. Children and their families are brought to the center three times a week. During their visits, the children participate in a developmentally appropriate preschool program. The adults receive assistance in accessing social and medical services and training on the use of appropriate parenting skills. They also have the opportunity to engage in vocational and adult education classes. The Birmingham Even Start Project does not duplicate any services already offered by community service agencies. Instead, it links families to already existing programs.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Parents assist in the preschool classrooms and on the playground.
- Transportation to and from the center and two hot meals a day are provided for the families.
- The center offers child care for infants and preschool classes for children through age four. The program includes developmentally appropriate activities for the children and solicits as much participation from the parents as possible.
- A home visitor spends one hour a week in each family's home to help parents enhance their interactions with their children. The home visitors show parents how materials in the home can be effective

teaching tools, and each visit begins and ends with the parent reading a book to the child.

- Parents attend a computer class twice a month to learn basic word processing skills.
- Once a month, all the families participate in a "group home visit" at which parents showcase newly-learned methods for interacting with their children.
- Representatives from medical and social agencies conduct seminars to inform the center's staff of available community resources.
- The center receives significant community support from local churches, educational fraternities, and businesses that have adopted the center and donated money, clothing, food, books, and other requested materials.

RESULTS

Parents participating in the Family Literacy project say that they are communicating with their children in a more effective and positive manner. As their reading and verbal skills improve, parents say that they feel more self-confident and self-sufficient and that they have a greater appreciation of formal education. The parents are also more actively seeking available social and medical services. Eureka staff and public school kindergarten teachers confirm these observations and feelings. They report significant differences in the social and cognitive development of children who have participated in the Even Start program as compared with non-participating children of similar backgrounds. These teachers also indicate that the parents of Even Start children are much more involved in their children's education. As with all Even Start programs, the Birmingham Even Start Project is monitored and evaluated by the federal government and the research corporations with which it holds contracts. Although the data are not yet available, the staff at the Eureka Family Center and the participants in the Birmingham Even Start Project already know that the program is successful.

FLAGLER COUNTY SCHOOLS DAYCARE

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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Flagler County (Florida) school system offers public preschool classes in its three elementary schools. After it was introduced, the program soon became so popular that long waiting lists developed. Teachers and administrators realized quickly that the system could no longer serve the needs of the growing numbers of young children in Flagler County, many of whom came from low-income families. The parents of these children could not afford child care and had difficulty finding jobs or continuing their education. To meet the needs of both the children and their parents, the Adult and Community Education Department of Flagler County Schools signed a contract with United Child Care, Inc., to establish a subsidized child-care center.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The center serves children, age six weeks to five years, whose parents qualify for services through United Child Care, Inc., or who are enrolled in the Adult and Community Education's Literacy Center or Adult High School. The program offers two valuable services to the community: more young children in Flagler County have the opportunity to participate in a quality preschool program and more adults in the community are encouraged to continue their education and, therefore, pursue job opportunities.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The center is located in portables adjacent to the elementary school that most of these children will attend when they are ready to start kindergarten. This proximity fosters a cooperative spirit between the day-care center and the school; preschool teachers at the center transfer all records to the elementary school when children graduate.

- Staff at the day-care center are paraprofessionals who receive training from United Child Care, Inc., as well as the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

- The school district apprises the day-care center's preschool teachers of all inservice opportunities offered to preschool and elementary school teachers.

- The coordinator of the day-care center has a cooperative working relationship with other programs housed at the Adult Community Education Department. In addition to the Literacy Center and Adult High School, these programs include Even Start, Chapter I, the Parent

Center, a volunteer program, parenting classes, and the Adult/Community Education Department's apprenticeship program.

- Through the Even Start program's family involvement component, Even Start staff are able to provide a strong link to the children's homes and serve as a referral source to the day-care center.

- Because Chapter I serves many of the older siblings of the children attending the day-care center, families receive services from both programs. Having all of these programs accessible and operating in one place enhances the delivery of services to each child's family.

- Local businesses, clubs, and organizations, including the local Kiwanis Club and high school Key Club, have become partners with the day-care center and donate materials and time.

RESULTS

The district program is helping the Adult and Community Education Department of Flagler County Schools fulfill its commitment to providing educational opportunities for every adult and child in the community. Parents and young children are receiving more formal education, thereby, enriching their lives and ultimately enriching the entire community.

JUST 4 & 5 DEVELOPMENTAL LABORATORY

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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Just 4 & 5 Developmental Laboratory in Mobile, Alabama, began as a six-week summer program for four-year-old children lacking prekindergarten skills. It was housed in two elementary schools. In the last three years, this successful program has grown into a nine-month, full-day operation and includes a kindergarten program for five-year-olds. It has moved into a renovated former high school and has been recognized by the National Secretary of Education's "Initiative to Improve the Education of Disadvantaged Children." The purpose of the Just 4 & 5 Developmental Laboratory is to help children "enter the regular school program with a solid sense of security, a positive self-esteem, and a long-term enthusiasm for learning."

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The Just 4 & 5 Developmental Laboratory is a preschool program for economically disadvantaged four- and five-year-old children. It is the only public preschool center in Alabama. Just 4 & 5 is an excellent example of the strength of collaborative efforts. It would not exist without a combination of Chapter I funding, the Mobile County Public Schools' administrative support, and the surrounding community's encouragement and support.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The community supported the renovation of an abandoned high school building, situated in a low-income, high-crime area of the city, into a learning facility for young children.
- The facility includes a fully furnished gymnasium, a specially designed playground, garden plots for each classroom, and equipment and supplies for the housing and care of classroom pets.
- All teachers in the program are certified in early childhood education and are Mobile County employees with the same salaries, benefits, and training opportunities as other teachers in the district.
- Teachers and teaching assistants receive extensive and continuous training. All teachers choose a developmentally appropriate practice in which they would like to develop expertise. They are then provided with opportunities throughout the year to share their knowledge with the rest of the teaching staff.
- Teachers arrange their schedules so that they can meet with their assistants during the school day at least three times a week.

- The media center contains books, manipulatives, audio-visual materials, a reading loft, and extensive teacher resources.
- A full-time nurse and full-time counselor are available to parents and children.
- The children's parents sign a contract agreeing to attend parenting workshops regularly. These workshops cover a number of issues related to child development and parenting skills.
- A Parent Advisory Council holds regular meetings throughout the year.
- Elementary school teachers who have Just 4 & 5 Developmental Laboratory graduates in their classrooms complete a midyear survey to evaluate the progress of these children and the long-term impact of the lab program.

RESULTS

The teachers at Just 4 & 5 are having a wonderful time watching children flourish at the school. The children exhibit a genuine enthusiasm for learning, a greater interest in listening to and writing stories, and enhanced self-confidence. The children's scores on the Ready Steps Language Survey are rising. The results of the 1990-91 survey indicate that the four-year-old children made significant gains in the area of higher-order thinking skills over the course of the year. They also made gains in the basic skills segment of the survey. Much of Just 4 & 5's success can be credited to the staff's teaching philosophy: a teacher's primary task is to build upon children's inherent inquisitive natures instead of imposing rigid academic standards.

PRESCHOOL LIAISON PROGRAM

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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Preschool Liaison Program was developed in 1980 as a collaborative effort to address the needs of preschool children in Alachua County, Florida. The program's major goals were to develop a continuum of comprehensive services that would improve the quality of services for at-risk preschool children and their families, enhance efficiency of service delivery, and improve access to services. The Preschool Liaison Program is achieving these goals by integrating the services of local Head Start programs, the state prekindergarten program, subsidized child care, and private preschool programs.

THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The Preschool Liaison Program involves all those in Alachua County who are working with at-risk preschool children and their families. The district program serves 700 preschool children directly through public preschool programs and another 1,500 children indirectly through contracted slots in public and private preschools. It is also able to provide enhancement funds to participating programs. A unique feature of the Preschool Liaison Program is that it is a long-standing community collaboration involving the school district and other preschool programs in the county. This collaboration enables the public school program to serve all at-risk preschool children in the district prior to kindergarten.

OTHER PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The program is monitored by a District Interagency Council with representatives from private preschools, Title XX child-care centers, Head Start, the school board, the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, mental health agencies, the day-care licensing agency, medical/dental services, exceptional student programs, vocational programs, the Association of Retarded Citizens, the Regional Transit Agency, the University of Florida, Sante Fe Community College, parents, independent advocacy groups, principals, and local community organizations.
- The program is administered with "wrap-around funding" from all involved organizations.
- Service providers attend demonstration workshops where they receive training in career development and resource development.
- A Family Services Center offers GED classes, parenting training, job placement opportunities, family counseling, health services, and related services in a "one-stop-shopping" setting.

- Preschool and kindergarten teachers throughout the county receive joint curriculum and resource referral training.
- Participants share resources such as the school board's film library, learning resource center, and distribution center, from which supplies can be purchased at reduced cost.
- Collaborators assist in providing medical, dental, and social services for preschoolers and their families.
- A summer program involves joint training and team teaching by preschool staff and kindergarten teachers who work together to ease students' transition to kindergarten.
- Each spring, the public schools receive complete records on incoming kindergartners, whose names are logged in by Medicaid number on an established database of preschool children. The schools can then identify immediately children who qualify for extra services and provide or continue those services for the children and their families.
- The school board helps families identify local resources by issuing a booklet entitled *Available Resources* upon their children's enrollment. Parents are surveyed during the first week of school each year to help identify the services they need.
- A well-developed transition plan provides for regular training for preschool directors that keeps them up-to-date on available resources and information.

RESULTS

Through community involvement and oversight, innovative and cooperative funding, maximized use of resources, and a shared vision for meeting the needs of young children and their families, Alachua County has been able to enhance its preschool programs and expand the services it provides to all children and their families. Through the use of a Family Needs Assessment instrument and the documentation done by the Head Start programs, Alachua County has shown a significant increase in the number of services being provided to young children and families. As a result of its success and longevity, the Preschool Liaison Program has become a model of comprehensive services delivery for other school systems in Florida.

STECOAH PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Contact:

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Stecoah Elementary School Preschool Program
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NEED = OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

The public school system in Robbinsville, North Carolina, was struggling with the impact on its community of high illiteracy, unemployment, and dropout rates as well as rising numbers of single-parent families. The principal at Stecoah Elementary School saw the need to provide more support to the families of entering kindergarten students. Intrigued by the success of comprehensive services programs in other areas, he, along with the associate superintendent of schools, enlisted the help of the Graham County School Board in establishing a similar program at Stecoah. The board formed a planning committee consisting of representatives from the school system, Stecoah's parent population, community agencies, and the local university. After attaining funding through the Chapter II program, which provides funds for early education programs for children and their families, the school system established the Stecoah Preschool Program.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The Stecoah Preschool Program is designed to meet the educational needs of three- to five-year-old children in Robbinsville. Because the developers believe that "the parent is the child's first and most important teacher," the program is also committed to meeting the needs of children's families. The Family Resource Center, which is an integral part of the Stecoah Preschool Program, provides needed services to parents and the community. The Center pulls together the preschool program, parent services, staff and program development classes, school and community services, teacher-parent consultation services, and teacher-staff training programs. The Preschool Program is open to sixteen three- to five-year-old children, with enrollment distributed equally according to gender, race, and at-risk factors.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- The Preschool Program serves as a research site for Western Carolina University. The research is focused on the long-term impact that a high-quality comprehensive preschool program can have on young children.
- A Home-School Coordinator makes home visits and plans and monitors activities sponsored by the Family Resource Center.
- The Family Resource Center provides several services for the preschoolers' parents:

1. A Parent Support Group meets biweekly to discuss parenting issues related to young children.

2. The Motheread/Fatheread program stresses family literacy by using children's literature to help adults learn to read.

3. The GED lab helps parents schedule high school equivalency classes at a convenient time.

4. A Job Bank provides a weekly update of job opportunities in western North Carolina.

5. The Resource Library offers multi-media resources to parents and teachers.

6. Workshops, newsletters, and conferences ensure effective communication.

7. Kidline, a telephone service, provides information to members of the community on the needs of young children and their families.

8. A home visitation program serves parents who do not have transportation to the Family Resource Center.

RESULTS

The Stecoah Preschool Program has galvanized the Graham County community. The interest and support of local businesses and public agencies is evident in their collaborating to offer services, workshops, and training to families with young children at Stecoah. As a result of its success, the Stecoah Preschool Program has been recognized by local, state, and federal agencies for its work in literacy and poverty prevention. Western Carolina University has chosen Stecoah Preschool as a placement/ training site for its student teachers. The university is also conducting a research project to collect longitudinal data on the program's effectiveness. Representatives of the Stecoah program have also served as hosts and presenters at numerous workshops and meetings throughout the state, thereby, acting as catalysts for action throughout the North Carolina preschool community.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT/EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Programs in this section focus on one specific component of an effective transition model: parent involvement and/or parent education. Educators are recognizing more and more the impact that parents and the family environment have on a child's success in school. Though the programs in this section do not represent fully developed transition programs, they highlight one of the major components that influence effective horizontal and vertical transitions for children. These programs are targeted very specifically at the parents of children who have been identified as being at risk for school failure. In meeting the needs of children's parents, the parent education programs ultimately have a positive and long-lasting impact with the children and their siblings as well. The education component most often provides parents with information on topics such as child development, school curriculum, availability of medical and social services, and strategies for accessing services.

Parent Involvement/Education Models

1. **Good Start**
   Lowndes County Schools, Valdosta, Georgia

2. **Kids And Parents at School (KAPS)**
   Ware County Board of Education, Waycross, Georgia

3. **Partners In Early Childhood Education (P.I.E.C.E.)**
   Canton Elementary School, Canton, Mississippi

4. **Project HOPE**
   Indian Valley Elementary School, Sylacauga, Alabama

GOOD START

Good Start is designed to give a "good start" to incoming kindergarten students identified as being at risk for school failure. The program seeks to improve the academic and social skills of these students while improving the observation and parenting skills of their parents. The children attend classes for three hours a day for five weeks during July and August. Each of the two operating sites in the county is staffed with a principal, two kindergarten teachers, two kindergarten paraprofessionals, a speech therapist, a secretary, and four interns from Valdosta State College.

The parents of the Good Start children participate in four evening parenting workshops, which they attend with their children. Each workshop begins with the children sharing something new that they learned that week. Typically, this presentation takes the form of a class performance for all of the parents. The children are then taken to their classrooms while the parents view videotaped clips of classroom activities that occurred that week. Each clip highlights a specific parenting/teaching skill and is used to teach the parents how to interact with their children in a positive and effective manner. After a question-answer period, parents visit their children's classroom where the teachers model the parenting/teaching skill that was addressed during the formal instructional time. The parents then practice the skill with their children in the classroom. Good Start staff provide follow-up activities and materials for parents to take home at the end of the 90-minute meeting.

Contact:

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Good Start
Lowndes County Schools
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Valdosta, GA 31603-1227
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KIDS AND PARENTS AT SCHOOL

Kids And Parents at School (KAPS) is designed for at-risk four-year-old children and their parents. Children selected to participate in the program have a single parent, have a parent who was a high school dropout, or come from a economically deprived family (qualify for free or reduced lunch). The children attend the preschool program five half-days a week during the regular school year. Their parents attend weekly parent group meetings at which they participate in a lesson on child development, observe in the classroom, and receive material for a home-learning activity, which the teacher explains and models for them. Parents are also invited to attend field trips with their children's classes and to participate on the Parent Advisory Committee.

The KAPS program provides a wealth of information to its participants through a resource library and Parent Activity Packs containing extensive information on parenting skills and enjoyable at-home activities. KAPS staff also make several home visits during the year. As summarized in its 1992 Validation Report, KAPS is helping to create a new generation of active and well-informed parents by teaching them "new ways to work with their children, play with them, care for them, and discipline them."

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PARTNERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Contact:

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Recognizing that parents need validation for the important work they do as the first and primary teachers of their children, the staff of Canton (Mississippi) Elementary School's Partners In Early Childhood Education (P.I.E.C.E.) program believe in empowering parents. P.I.E.C.E., which is funded by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, serves all parents living in the Canton Public School District who have children age three to seven. These families are served by home visitors who provide lessons and reinforcement for good parenting skills, conduct developmental screenings of the children, and assist the families in obtaining the social and medical services they need.

The P.I.E.C.E. program also provides child and family counseling, a toy-lending library, a newsletter with information on child development and suggestions of enjoyable family activities, and a telephone WARMLINE that offers information on community resources, child development, and coping skills. At the program's resource center, parents and children can check out books, videotapes, and magazines and participate in informal discussions with P.I.E.C.E. faculty. P.I.E.C.E. staff also provide referral services for the Adult Education Services in Canton.

P.I.E.C.E. staff, parents, and children are all reaping benefits from having participated in the program. Staff experience feelings of empowerment as they learn about available community resources. Parents receive more services and are better informed about how to work with their children in appropriate ways and how to access available resources. The children show increased motor, concept, and language development. Through its continued commitment to helping parents help themselves, the P.I.E.C.E. program is also helping the children in the Canton Public School District and the community at large.

PROJECT HOPE

The idea that parents are the first and most powerful teachers of their children is the basis for a parent education program in Sylacauga, Alabama. The guidance counselor and principal at Indian Valley Elementary School used this idea and a vision for a parent training program to galvanize the entire Sylacauga community. A task force consisting of representatives from the Departments of Human Resources, Mental Health, and Juvenile Probation; the school system (parents, teachers, and administrators); and local businesses oversees the program and offers guidance and support.

In addition to weekly small-group sessions, Project HOPE (Helping Our Parents through Education) presents five programs for parents during the school year. Featuring up-to-date and positive approaches to parenting, the programs are conducted by representatives from each of the participating organizations as well as local pediatricians, the Sylacauga Police Department, and other community leaders. Most of the programs are offered at Indian Valley Elementary School, where baby-sitting and refreshments are provided to participants. A collection of books, videotapes, and other materials on parenting are also available to participating parents.

In addition to helping parents share their skills and talents with their children, Project HOPE has motivated parents to become more actively involved at their children's schools. Other schools in the area are planning to implement similar programs.

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